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ABSTRACT

An overview is presented of the final report of the Parent Project, which sought to demonstrate whether participant group methods are suitable for helping low-income parents help themselves and their preschool children in Head Start. The nature, rationale, and interrelationships among the various components of the project are specified. The first part of the report reviews studies to prepare measures for the Parent Project--the invention, refinement, and replication of appropriate research instruments to use with the basic panel of Parent Project families who were to receive the participant group intervention. Part II deals with the studies of family dynamics and socialization with Parent Project evaluation methods and families. In Part III a review is given of the Head Start parents in the participant groups, with five sources of evaluative data assessing the effects of the participant group meetings, including the mothers' and childrens' pre- and post-test changes, parents' attendance at meetings, the content or process of the meetings, and data from a questionnaire study. (LH)

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Chapter 1

An Overview of the Parent Project[1]

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Although family background and parental behavior plays a role in maintaining the poverty cycle, few programs have been successful in changing the parents' behavior. This paper is an overview of the final report of the Parent Project which sought to demonstrate whether participant group methods are suitable for helping low income parents help themselves and their preschool children in Head Start. The Parent Project had the dual mission of effectively intervening in a community setting while conducting an objective evaluation of the intervention endeavor. The purpose of the present paper is to specify the nature, rationale, and interrelationships among the various components of this complex and rather ambitious project.

This report has three parts, the first two of which are methodological or basic research in orientation, and, in a sense, separable from the main thrust of the participant group intervention, which is described in the third part.

Part I. Studies to Prepare Measures for the Parent Project

Due to the paucity of information and research methods concerning relevant outcome variables, our first work was methodological, but it was also intrinsically related to the description of the participant groups. First, there were no, or only few available unbiased, sensitive research instruments to reflect pre-, postgroup changes in parents and their children concerning the critical parent-child interaction that is the basis of the child's socialization. Therefore, five studies were devoted to the invention, refinement, and replication of appropriate research instruments to use with the basic panel of Parent Project families who were to receive the participant group intervention. These studies did not use the basic panel of Parent Project families. These studies all have a basic methodological purpose for the Project, and most have a substantive contribution in addition. However, only the methodology relevant to the Parent Project is discussed in this overview.

[1]Portions of this paper were presented in the paper, Head Start Parents in Small Groups: The Miami Parent Project, to introduce the Symposium: Socialization in Economically Disadvantaged Black Families, at the annual meeting of the American Psychological Association, Washington, D.C., September, 1971.

[2]This article was written by Dr. Wohlford in his private capabity prior to his present position. No official support or endorsement by the Office of Child Development or the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, is intended or should be inferred.

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Chapter 2: Older Brothers' Influence on Sex-Typed, Aggressive, and Dependent Behavior in Father-Absent Children, was of methodological interest for two reasons. First, the two sub-samples in this study were both drawn from the low income Black community in Miami, Florida, from which the Parent Project sample was drawn, and the two sub-samples had certain differences between them which were important factors in considering how to select the Parent Project sample. Second, this study used more differentiated and sensitive measures of sex-typing, aggression, and dependence than have been previously reported.

Chapters 3. and 4. concerned building instruments to measure maternal child-rearing attitudes and interpersonal behavior on the basis of a new method applied to previously used questionnaire items. The new method, referred to as the cluster analysis, combines statistically-based and content-based analyses of items to yield meaningful clusters or scales where the $\bar{N}$ is too small to permit a true factor analysis, and it is described in Chapter 3: An Inventory to Assess Cross-Cultural Family Conflicts in Adolescent Girls. The cluster analysis consists of determining the inter-item correlation matrix for the entire series of items; judging first what items cluster together to form distinct scales from the pure correlational pattern; and then judging from the item content which items or sub-clusters reflect the same variable, and hence should be combined into a single scale, even though the inter-item correlation alone would not warrant it. The general soundness of this method is demonstrated in the study described in Chapter 3, in which this method was used to devise certain scales, that were then successfully replicated in a second sample. Chapter 4: Raising Children in a Black Ghetto: Maternal Attitudes and Child-Rearing Practices, describes a study in which 122 low income Black mothers in Miami orally responded to the standard Parent Attitude Research Instrument (PARI; Schaefer & Bell, 1958) and the Fundamental Interpersonal Relations Orientation Scale-B (FIRO; Schutz, 1966). Cluster analysis was used to reduce the 125 items of the original PARI down to 21 new scales that appear more meaningful to this population than the original 25 scales. Then, the 21 new PARI scales were reduced from 125 to 65 items to shorten the length of the interview required to administer the instrument. Similarly, the new 10 FIRO scales were reduced from 54 items to a total of 28 items.

Chapter 5: Effect of Interviewers' Race and Sex on Black Mothers and their Head Start Children, utilized another part of the information in the above study, using the analysis of variance by race and sex on both the new and the original scales.

The final chapter in Part I, Chapter 6, simply reports the feasibility study conducted in Spring, 1969, to determine the

relative community receptivity to the idea of Head Start parents' group meetings. The mothers responded positively to the idea, albeit a hypothetical one.

Part II. Studies of Family Dynamics and Socialization with Parent Project Evaluation Methods and Families

Even more surprizing than the lack of appropriate instruments for low income parents was the almost complete lack of documentation of similarity existing between parents and their children or the specific cause-effect relations that parents' child-rearing attitudes and behavior have upon their children's behavior. Seven studies attempt to close this gap in our basic knowledge. Chapter 7 reviews the literature of a portion of this area, that of research on parental attitudes.

First, after Chapter 8. discusses the pivotal marital relationship with all its implications for the child's development, the next five chapters, Chapters 9. to 12. and 15. consider the direct and indirect effects of the mothers' attitudes and behavior on the children's delay of gratification, anxiety and defensiveness, competence, field dependence-independence, and aggression, respectively. Chapter 13. reports the comparison of teachers' ratings and figure drawings as measures of pre-school children's emotional adjustment. Chapter 14. presents a multi-dimensional aggression scale based on the children's structured doll play responses.

Again, as was the case regarding appropriate research instruments, if such knowledge were already available, the task of the Parent Project would have been simpler. In absence of such knowledge, either positive or negative, it became necessary for us to consider whether we could possibly have any impact on the children even if we were successful in modifying their parents' behavior. For instance, if children's ability to delay gratification were completely orthogonal to their mothers' own personal time, then making the mothers more future-directed and have longer protension (extension of personal time into the future) would not have a payoff for the children's ability to delay. In that case, the time, effort, and expense of intervening would be doomed to failure before starting. Fortunately, in the example I cited, the expected effects did prevail, but complexly. The mothers' personal time was related to her child's delay, but more strongly for girls than for boys, and more strongly for father-present boys than for father-absent boys.

The network of possible causality is not confined to a simple paradigm, of parent variable X causing child variable X, which is Case 1 in Table 1. For instance, if variable X is anxiety, the

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Insert Table 1 about here.

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Table 1

Hypothetical Illustrations of Causality in Parent-Child Behavior Patterns.

Case 1.	Parent Variable X (Anxiety)	→	Child Variable X (Anxiety)
Case 2.	Parent Variable Y (Physical Abuse)	→	Child Variable X (Anxiety)
Case 3.	Parent Variable X (Anxiety)	←	Child Variable Z (Hyperactivity)
Case 4.	Parent Variable X (Anxiety) ↓ Parent Variable Y (Physical Abuse)	→	Child Variable X (Anxiety)
Case 5.	Child Variable X (Anxiety) ↓ Parent Variable X (Anxiety)	←	Child Variable Z (Hyperactivity)
Case 6.	Parent Variable Y (Physical Abuse) ↑ Parent Variable X (Anxiety)	→ ←	Child Variable X (Anxiety) ↓ Child Variable Z (Hyperactivity)

parent's and child's relative levels of anxiety may be quite unrelated, but the child's anxiety may be highly related to the parent's variable Y of physical abuse of him as part of punishment in child-rearing, as illustrated in Case 2 in Table 1. Or again, the child's variable 2 of hyperactivity could lead to increased anxiety in the parent. These three illustrative cases need not be mutually exclusive, as seen by Cases 4, 5, and 6. Case 1 depicts what would be a pure case of the child's imitating of the social model of his mother. But the mother's anxious model alone may be less important as the cause of her child's anxiety than her erratic physical abuse. If the mother's own anxiety causes her to abuse her child, then the abuse becomes an intervening variable in the old Hullian sense, mediating the parent's anxiety causing the child's anxiety as seen in Case 4. Or, in the other direction, the child's hyperactivity may be an intervening variable between the child's anxiety causing the parents' anxiety, as seen in Case 5. Or, both intervening variables may operate simultaneously, as seen in Case 6.

The present, rather rudimentary knowledge of family systems and family dynamics suggests that it is likely that intervening variables processes or the even more complex circular chain of cause-and-effect relationships of Case 6 are the rule rather than the simple one-way effects of Case 1 or 2. Therefore, an analysis that attempts to be comprehensive should properly take into account these complexities. Further complexities are introduced by including the father in the family system with a new resultant configuration arising from the marital relationship's overriding effect on other aspects of the family system (Satir, 1967).

Nevertheless, in spite of the above qualifications and reservations, a basic point of inquiry is the investigation of the simple paradigm seen in Case 1. Under what basic conditions is the simplistic model of the socialization process applicable, if at all? Most of the chapters of Part II concern a rather dramatic mosaic than extends our fundamental knowledge about the pattern of parent-child behavior.

Social critics like Moynihan and others assert that many of the Negroes' problems are a function of their weak family structure, or "non-family," as some have termed it. Conversely, Blacks like Billingslea (1970) argue it's the other way around: The Black family structure is handicapped because Blacks hold a scapegoated position in our society which is still marked by white racism. While the studies in Part II do not presume to solve this controversy, they do deal directly with two issues that must be confronted if the controversy is ever to be solved. First, these studies concern Black families, and the results are compared with corrollary results obtained with white families wherever possible. Second, these studies are primarily focused on the family as a social unit of inquiry in itself and as a socializing influence of the preschool children.

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Part III. Head Start Parents in Participant Groups

Finally, Part III. presents the heart of the Parent Project intervention endeavor. There are a total of five sources of evaluative data to assess the effects of the participant group meetings, including the mothers' and children's pre-, post-test changes as two of the five. These objective mothers' and childrens data constitute the basis of the more traditional research thrust. Equally important, however, are two additional sources of data evaluating the effectiveness of the groups: The parents' attendance at the meetings, and the content or process of the group meetings themselves. The fifth source of data is based on a questionnaire study following the parent group meetings, and comparable to the feasibility study reported in Chapter 7.

Chapter 16, The Use of Participant Group Methods with Low Income Families, begins with a review of earlier parent programs and rationale for using the participant group methods. Next, in Chapter 17, the Parent Trainers Manual used in the preservice training is presented. Chapter 18 gives a narrative of the group intervention, including the highlights of all eight groups, a total of over 174 hours of group process, and examines the groups' attendance records as two criteria of the effectiveness or success of parent groups. Next, in Chapters 19 & 20, parents who participated and their children are compared with parents who did not participate and their children. Each of the next three chapters, Chapters 20, 22, and 23 describe other criteria for success: pre- postgroup changes in the parents and their children, and the effect on the community, respectively. Finally, Chapter 24 draws conclusions and makes recommendations.

General Design

To meet the demands imposed by the field conditions, all families in five designated Head Start centers were invited to participate in this project. Ideally, all mothers and five-year old children in the designated centers were to have been evaluated twice during the program year, as a pretest and a posttest to the participant groups, and their children evaluated a third time in a year-after follow-up.

In the original design, the fourth Head Start center was to have served as a control group, receiving all the evaluations but not experimental treatment of parent group meetings. It was hoped that the incentive of payment for both group meetings and evaluations would have induced participation of 75% to 100% of the parents in the designated experimental centers. However, the actual participation was at about 50%, so we had to use all the four centers receiving pretest evaluations, and add a fifth center to invite parents to the participant group meetings. Therefore, the original design was modified by the exigencies of the field situation. Out of all those parents invited to the group meetings, the experimental group attending the participant groups was self-selected, as was the control group who was a self-selected group of those parents who did not elect to attend the groups.